

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FOLLOWING REPEAT BOMBAY 2119 SENT ACTION NEW DELHI

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BOMBAY 2119

E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: BLITZ EDITOR KARANJIA'S INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER

1. HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW OF KARANJIA'S INTERVIEW WITH PM WHICH WE UNDERSTAND TOOK PLACE WHILE HE WAS IN DELHI THIS PAST WEEKEND.
2. ON CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION: MRS GANDHI IS QUOTED AS SAYING "NEITHER THE SPIRIT OF OUR CONSTITUTION NOR ITS ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS CAN CHANGE...I AM NOT THINKING IN TERMS OF EITHER A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OR A NEW CONSTITUTION. A SECOND LOOK DOES NOT MEAN AN ALTERNATIVE CONSTITUTION." KARANJIA QUOTES HER AS WARNING, HOWEVER, THAT "WE CAN AND SHOULD HAVE A LOOK AT THE PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES WE HAVE TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE ADOPTED OBJECTIVES OF THE CONSTITUTION. MANY OF THESE PROCEDURES AND PROVISIONS HAVE IN EFFECT WORKED AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION AND GIVEN ENORMOUS SCOPE FOR SMALL OBSTRUCTIVE GROUPS TO CREATE TROUBLE AND ENGINEER CRISES."

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3. ON PLURALITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES: IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION "YOU ACCEPT PLURALITY OF PARTIES IN THE FUTURE POLITICAL COMPLEX IN INDIA", MRS GANDHI IS QUOTED AS SAYING "I WOULD THINK SO."

4. ON OVER-REACTION TO THE SITUATION: "SO FAR AS I KNOW, FORCE HAS NOT BEEN USED AT ALL, NOT EVEN IN A SMALL WAY ANYWHERE. IF THE COUNTRY IS QUIET, IT IS MAINLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT TROUBLE-MAKERS WERE DENIED THE MEANS TO WHIP UP POPULAR FEELINGS THROUGH MISREPRESENTATION, MALIGNING OR MISLEADING THE PEOPLE...SOME PEOPLE HAD GONE UNDERGROUND EARLIER, OTHERS WENT UNDERGROUND AFTERWARDS, AND THEY ARE CONTINUING THEIR PREPARATIONS. THERE IS A GROWING BUILD-UP IN THE MEDIA, AS YOU YOURSELF HAVE NOTED, IN SOME FOREIGN COUNTRIES. SO IT IS EASY NOW TO SAY THAT I OVER-REACTED, BUT IF ONE READ WHAT THE PRESS WAS SAYING AND THE DIRECTIONS TOWARDS WHICH VARIOUS LEADERS OF THE MORCHA SEEMED TO BE LEADING, I DON'T THINK WE HAD MUCH OF A CHOICE."

5. ON 20 POINT ECONOMIC PROGRAM: MRS GANDHI IN RESPONSE RULED OUT ANY NEW AGENCY FOR IMPLEMENTATION SAYING PROGRAM INVOLVES ENTIRE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE. "WE DO WANT, HOWEVER, AND ARE TRYING TO HAVE, FAR GREATER PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT, POPULAR PARTICIPATION...WE WANT TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE THE WHOLE PUBLIC PROVIDES A WATCHDOG COMMITTEE."

6. ON PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: "IT IS TOO EARLY TO SPEAK OF DATES. MEANTIME A LARGE NUMBER OF ARRESTED PEOPLE OF VARIOUS CATEGORIES HAVE BEEN RELEASED" AND "THE PROCESS IS GOING ON."

7. ON MOVES FOR A NATIONAL RECONCILIATION: "I THINK IT IS A LITTLE TOO EARLY TO SAY ANYTHING DEFINITE...ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, ALSO, JAYA PRAKASH NARAYAN HAS SAID THAT HE HAD NO OBJECTION TO RECONCILIATION, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE WAS CARRYING ON HIS AGITATION, AND WAS NOT CONDEMNING THE HATE CAMPAIGN WHICH WAS VITIATING THE ATMOSPHERE. THE TWO THINGS CANNOT GO ON TOGETHER." IN ASKING WHETHER J.P. IS SOLELY IN CHARGE AND ABOUT THE OTHER PEOPLE WHO INVOLVED IN HIS MOVEMENT, PM GOES ON TO SAY "I THINK WE HAVE TO STUDY THE SITUATION A LITTLE MORE BEFORE WE MAKE ANY MOVE, BECAUSE I VERY MUCH DOUBT WHETHER THE OPPOSITION FRONT HAS GIVEN UP ITS STAND" AND ADDS THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"UNFORTUNATELY, A LOT OF FOREIGN PEOPLE ARE TAKING AN INTEREST IN THIS, WHICH DOES NOT HELP THE SITUATION." AT ANOTHER POINT SHE STATES "OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THE GENTLEMAN WHO WAS PUT IN CHARGE OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THIS CAMPAIGN IS STILL AT LARGE, AND HE KEEPS ANNOUNCING WHAT THINGS WILL BE DONE AND SO ON AND SO FORTH. (COMMENT: WE ASSUME THIS IN REFERENCE TO GEORGE FERNANDES.) AND THE FOREIGN PRESS ALSO PICKS IT UP AND EXAGGERATES IT VERY MUCH OUT OF ALL PROPORTION."

8. ON FOREIGN INTERFERENCE, THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE IS QUOTED:

KARANJIA: "I KNOW THERE IS A MOVE TO EXPORT RESISTANCE HERE, BUT THAT ITSELF SHOWS THAT DOMESTIC RESISTANCE HAS FLOPPED. THE VERY FACT THAT SOMEBODY IN LONDON, OR WASHINGTON, OR BONN IS CREATING TROUBLE FOR US...". PM: "(INTERRUPTING)... WITHOUT TAKING THE LEAST TROUBLE TO FIND OUT WHAT THE SITUATION WAS OR IS* MANY OF THE WESTERN BOOKS WHICH WE USED TO READ WERE ALWAYS EXTOLLING THE SENSE OF FAIRPLAY OF PEOPLE ABROAD AS OPPOSED TO THE ORIENTALS OR ASIATICS, AS WE WERE THEN CALLED. BUT WE FIND THAT IN MANY OF THE FOREIGN JOURNALS THERE IS NO FAIRPLAY AT ALL. THEY ARE GIVING AN ENTIRELY ONE-SIDED PICTURE WITHOUT BOTHERING TO SEE WHETHER IT HAS ANY CONNECTION WHATSOEVER WITH FACTS. AND WHEN OUR PEOPLE WRITE TO THEM, THEY JUST DO NOT PRINT THE LETTERS ON THE GROUND THAT THERE IS NO SPACE. OR THEY MIGHT JUST PUBLISH THE MILDEFL OF THE LETTERS AND THEY SAY THEY HAVE REPRESENTED THE OTHER POINT OF VIEW. ALL THE LETTERS THEY PUBLISH ARE AGAINST US."

9. ON CENSORSHIP: PM AGREES THAT PRE-CENSORSHIP SHOULD BE REPLACED BY SELF-CENSORSHIP UNDER A PRESS ADVISORY SYSTEM ORGANIZED WITH THE COOPERATION AND PARTICIPATION OF EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS.

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UNQUOTE.

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